Virtual Connectedness: Working Together to Create a Companion Site for Spanish Phonetics & Phonology
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Abstract
The creation of a resource for students who are struggling or who simply want to practice their skills, that is accessible to all, is crucial, especially during the current times of virtual learning. We have created a companion site for the Spanish Phonetics & Phonology course for all SUNY students to use, as there is no resource of its kind, that is in the target language (Spanish) and is free of cost for all students and faculty. This will be a long-lasting tool that will allow for clarification of concepts, practice with engaging virtual exercises, and many opportunities to exercise skills and learning. After students learn concepts in class, they can access the companion site to further reinforce the comprehension of content, test what they know, see diagrams, practice, and get tips from other students who have already taken the course. We use h5p plugins in order to create different types of interactive activities for students in each module, which enhance the practice and learning experience. Each module in the site follows the same structure: 1) objectives of the module, 2) a short pre-reading quiz, 3) the content of the module, used to review concepts covered in class with examples and diagrams, 4) a “tips from other students” section so that students can learn from other students and remember some tricks, 5) a section for activities and practice, and 6) a summary of what was covered in the module. Each key resource that has been crucial to the creation of the companion site are Pressbooks and Monday.com. Pressbooks is the site used to create content and interactive activities. Monday.com is a site that allows for task management, progress tracking, making comments, and for student-faculty accountability. This companion site is an Open Educational Resource (OER) and is ADA-compliant, so that all students-regardless of income and potential disability- can access it for free. This resource also falls into the category of Open Pedagogy, with our companion site being one of the few Open Pedagogy projects across the SUNY system, where content is planned and created by students under faculty supervision. This project would not have been made possible without the generosity of the College Foundation’s Creative Activity Grant.

Description & Goals
With the creation of the companion site, we hope to provide an Open Educational Resource for all future students of the Spanish Phonetics & Phonology course to be able to use for free. The creation and publication of the site will integrate the content of the course alongside engaging virtual exercises for students to be able to assess their progress. Another goal of the creation of this site was that it is ADA-compliant. We want the site to be accessible to all students, regardless of potential disability. Thus, we have followed all ADA standards with the creation of the site, such as making the navigation of the site easily organized, as well as using proper headings for subsections for those who might be using an audio tool for using the site. Overall, we are hoping to create a long-lasting tool that will assist both students and faculty involved in the course. We seek to design a uniquely effective companion site that clarifies concepts and provides students with opportunities to exercise their skills and learning. This resource will help all SUNY students who are struggling with Spanish phonetics and are seeking a free, easily-accessible online tool.

The Creative Process
When creating this companion site, we first had to learn how to use Pressbooks, the website that allows us to create the companion site. We met with a librarian and the SUNY Oneonta instructional designer who taught us how to navigate Pressbooks. We then started to create content to put in the site and assign tasks to the two of us for each week using Monday.com in order to stay on track. Monday.com is a site that allows us to easily assign tasks to each other, to track our progress on each task, to notify each other when we have completed a task, and to make comments to each other. When creating the first module, it took a little getting used to in order to figure out a layout to use and how to make the interactive activities. None of us are technology experts, but this was something that was easy to learn how to do, and it ended up being fun once we got the hang of it! We use h5p plugins in order to create different types of interactive activities such as multiple-choice questions, question sets, true/false questions, flashcards, etc. We create the questions to add and simply copy and paste the h5p plugin code into the module to allow it to show up in the module when someone is viewing it. Each week we complete two modules, including both content and activities, once a module is complete it gets revised by Professor Escudero, and we then go back in and make revisions. Each module takes a lot of revising and editing before we can say it is complete. To create content, we find images online that are public domain, we take diagrams from textbooks that are open educational resources, and we put our own notes from the Spanish phonetics and phonology course into our own words in order to make it the simplest we can for other students. We constantly make changes to the content and activities of the site, so that it looks the best when it is finalized. In each module, we include an objectives section so that students know what they will be reviewing in that module, a short quiz to test what they already know before they start reading, the actual content to review concepts covered in class with examples and diagrams, a “tips from other students” section so that students can learn from other students and remember some tricks when they are taking exams, a section for activities and practice, and finally a summary of what was covered in the module. Each module has the exact same layout to provide for consistency.

Foreseeable Conclusions
When the companion site is published on May 6th, we want it to be a helpful resource for students taking Spanish Phonetics & Phonology to use to practice what they have already learned in class. After students learn in class, they can go to the website to further reinforce content, to test what they know, to see diagrams, to practice the content, and to get tips from other students who have already taken the course. We want students to be able to use the site to learn, to study, and to practice. It explains concepts in a more concise and simpler way, while also providing examples, and we believe it will be a very helpful resource to all SUNY students who are struggling with phonetics and phonology. When they are unclear on a topic, they can look up its definition in the glossary and practice it in its corresponding module in order to get a more thorough understanding.